

the shelf; that they look at how it is working, what is working, what is not, what are the challenges in front of us, are we making sure that we stay on them every day. Congress has to keep a close watch to make sure this isn't because the cameras were rolling a year ago or today but something that is effective far into the future. We have to work to make sure they meet those goals.

Secondly, we have to focus our attention on treating the new injuries to our servicemembers who are suffering in Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly traumatic brain injury. TBI is a significant wound of this war, but we have only just begun to understand how we treat it. We have to recognize that whenever there is an explosion in Iraq or Afghanistan or wherever we have soldiers on the ground, the effects of that, not just on the soldiers in the vehicle but even those close by and sometimes hundreds of yards away, can have a damaging impact on the brain, called traumatic brain injury. We still don't know all we need to about how to treat TBI, and we still have soldiers coming home every day, every month who have just been diagnosed with TBI or perhaps not diagnosed, and we need to make sure they get the correct diagnosis and treatment.

Congress has authorized millions of new dollars for research, but we have to ensure that we get the results from that research. Then we have to make sure we take action based on what we have learned.

I am extremely disappointed that the President seems to have lost sight of that already. He has proposed to this Congress an 8-percent cut for VA medical and prosthetic research in his fiscal year 2009 budget. That is incredibly shortsighted, and he can be sure—and every Member of this body can be sure—I am going to fight that every step of the way. We need to find out how to better treat TBI, how to diagnosis it, how to deal with PTSD and how to diagnose and treat it effectively. That takes research, and we have to stay on top of it.

Finally, and most difficult, we have to change a military culture in which servicemembers are told that mental illness is an excuse for their pain and which fails to recognize that psychological wounds can be more serious than some of their physical injuries. Congress again has given the military hundreds of millions of dollars to improve its mental health care system. We have pushed through legislation this past year requiring the military and the VA to destigmatize mental health treatment, to increase awareness of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome, and to do further research on traumatic brain injury. But recent reports show that the Army's suicide prevention efforts need a lot more work. The numbers of suicides have risen since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began, and last year as many as 121 soldiers committed sui-

cide. That is a 20-percent increase over the year before.

I was struck by a recent report by the Associated Press which was a stark reminder of how serious this issue is. That article reported on a VA study which found that more than half of the veterans who took their own lives from 2001 to 2005 were members of the National Guard or Reserve, even though the Guard and Reserve have made up less than a third of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Prolonged deployments are stretching our troops to the breaking point. Earlier this week General Casey acknowledged his concern about the strain on the military. He told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Army is under so much stress from extended deployments that we must reduce the length of combat tours as soon as possible. Many of our servicemembers have seen their best friends killed. They have seen other untold horrors. Yet somehow we expect them to come back from the battlefield, come back home unaffected by what they have seen, or their experience. We have to ensure that the military takes action to ensure that our troops are getting the psychological care they need. We need to see a change in the culture. That change has to be more than a talking point. Senior military leaders have pledged to do more, but they have to ensure that their words and their programs are being executed in the field. They have to work to break down the stigma that is, unfortunately, associated with seeking mental health treatment. They have to ensure that troops have psychiatrists and psychologists to talk to, and they have to ensure that those who seek help aren't then penalized. We have to find ways to reach out to servicemembers who are discharged and are not seeking care from the VA. This is especially important for our Guard and Reserves who oftentimes, when they come home, don't think of themselves as veterans. They return from the war and go back to their civilian jobs without ever getting help.

In my State of Washington, over 10,200 Guard and Reserve members have now served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our troops and veterans are heroes who are sacrificing for our Nation. It is time for our Government to wake up and provide them with the care they need.

I voted against going to war in Iraq. But I have said consistently that no matter how anyone feels about the war, we have an obligation as leaders to make sure our men and women who fight for us get the care they deserve. I am proud of the way this Congress, led by the Democratic majority, moved to address the problems facing our returning servicemembers, which clearly wasn't a priority for the Bush administration. Here in Congress, we said: Not on our watch, not anymore.

A year after the Walter Reed story drew attention to the treatment of

servicemembers, we have made progress. But we cannot let this issue fade away. After examining the President's VA budget proposal, I have to tell my colleagues, I am disappointed that the administration still doesn't seem to get it. In his State of the Union Address this year, President Bush said he was dedicated to providing for our Nation's veterans. But at a time when thousands of new veterans are entering the VA system with serious medical needs as a result of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the administration is underestimating the cost of medical care and is cutting funding for construction and medical and prosthetic research. At a time when our older veterans are seeking care in record numbers, the President is proposing fees for them and copays that are essentially going to shut the door of the VA to thousands of people who served our country. That is wrong. I am going to be working very hard this year to ensure that those misguided proposals do not become reality.

The same is true as we address the budget for caring for our troops. Our servicemembers risk their lives for our security every single day. They have done everything we have asked. We have to live up to our commitment to them.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are advised by the Democratic cloakroom there will not be a member of the majority who will come in to use the remainder of their morning business time, so I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak during the remainder of that time as well as the 30 minutes allotted to the minority.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Chair.

IRAQ

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we are confronted with a piece of legislation introduced by the distinguished Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. FEINGOLD, which calls for setting forth the global strategy of the United States to combat and defeat al-Qaida and its affiliates. The question I guess I would ask is: Where have those who propose a new strategy been? Have they been paying attention to the good news that has been coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan when it comes to our ability and

our successes to combat global terrorism and particularly the threat of al-Qaida?

I think the legislation that has been proposed is both misguided and unnecessarily duplicative of the efforts which I will describe here, which are ongoing, and would literally cause us to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

On a more basic level, I think this legislation misses the point. Every time I come back to work here in Washington, DC, I almost feel there is a parallel universe operating here in Washington where some have voluntarily suspended their powers of disbelief and ignored the facts that seem to me to be as plain as the nose on your face. But I think in light of the fact that this legislation has been introduced, we need to talk about it and provide the American people with the evidence with which they can make their own decisions about what is happening with regard to the fight against al-Qaida.

This bill would require the administration to set forth a strategy for fighting al-Qaida. I do not know what the proponents think we have been doing since 9/11 but fighting al-Qaida wherever we may find them, but that is what the bill calls for. Of course, the bill also conveniently neglects the various strategies we have in place, including some that are classified which we cannot talk about here on the floor of the Senate, but which the distinguished Senator from Wisconsin as a member of the Intelligence Committee knows—because he is on the Intelligence Committee; he has been briefed in a classified setting about these strategies—he knows we have a number of strategies in place, and this proposal seems to act as if nothing has happened, when that is not the case at all.

I would interject that overall in the operations against al-Qaida, in Iraq in 2007, we have seen the capture of 8,800 terrorists, while an additional 2,400 have been killed. Of those we captured or killed, 52 were senior emirs or commanders, 32 were leaders of improvised explosive device teams, 24 were cell leaders, and 92 were other facilitators. In other words, we have been effective in going after high-value targets in Iraq and literally decapitating the leadership of al-Qaida. That is the reason why al-Qaida is on the run in Iraq and, yes, even in Afghanistan.

But to recapitulate, the various strategies that are already in place would seem to be ignored by this legislation. These include the President's National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, which was revised by the administration in September of 2006, and which outlines in a clear and straightforward fashion the strategic vision for the global war on terror.

Also, there is the President's National Implementation Plan, which was completed in June of 2006. This document is a classified, comprehensive plan, so we are not going to talk about

it on the floor in detail. But it provides for the execution of our national counterterrorism strategy, and it provides a detailed breakdown of which executive branch agencies are charged with carrying out the specific tasks and activities as part of that overall strategy.

Now, Congress, as I said, is aware of all these documents. We get classified briefings. Any Member of Congress who cares enough about it can go to room 407 here in the Capitol and gain access to them. Additionally, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is conducting his own review of the al-Qaida strategy, which will be finished later this year. So it is a disingenuous and hollow argument, indeed, to say the administration or this country, the U.S. Government, lacks a coherent plan to neutralize al-Qaida or that the current strategy for combating al-Qaida is not working and it needs to be replaced.

The numbers speak for themselves. I am going to go through these in rather quick order, but I think the numbers speak louder than words.

During the period of May to June 2007, as this chart demonstrates, we have seen 26 al-Qaida in Iraq leaders captured or killed. They include some pretty evil characters, people such as Khalil al-Mashhadani, a senior Iraqi in the al-Qaida-Iraq network. He was a principal intermediary between al-Qaida senior leadership and Abu Ayyub al-Masri. He ordered all Iraqi emirs to wear suicide vests—a trend we are still seeing today—and confirmed in interrogation that al-Qaida lost the al-Anbar safe havens due to coalition operations and tribal engagements by the Awakening Groups, which I will talk about in a minute. He was captured in July and sentenced to death by an Iraqi court this past September.

We have seen since that time, in July and August, senior terrorists captured or killed. It simply is not true to suggest that we are ineffective or not focused on capturing or killing al-Qaida's senior leadership in Iraq or wherever we may find them in Afghanistan or elsewhere.

For example, in August, we were successful in capturing the emir of greater Samarra, the mastermind behind the destruction of the Samarra mosque in February of 2006, generally credited with unleashing the ethnic conflict which nearly led to a civil war in Iraq. He operated the Samarra terrorist network responsible for improvised explosive devices and vehicle bomb attacks. He orchestrated the Kirkuk courthouse bombing in June of 2006 that killed 20 and injured more than 100. This emir of greater Samarra was killed in a targeted raid this past August.

But to remind my colleagues of the kinds of barbaric and evil attacks these al-Qaida leaders have perpetrated on their own people, by and large in Iraq, this individual orchestrated the Kirkuk courthouse bombing in June of 2006. He masterminded a vehicle bomb attack against the Iraqi Army checkpoint in Samarra in 2006, in which 29

Iraqi security forces were killed and another 66 injured.

So that is August of 2007. As you can see, the numbers even go up in September of 2007, with senior terrorists captured or killed. Each one of these pictures on this chart is a different story: the brown squares depicting those who have been captured; the red squares indicate those who have been killed.

Clearly, Iraqi, American, and coalition forces, along with our allies—the Iraqis who have basically turned state's evidence on al-Qaida in Iraq have allowed us the intelligence necessary to capture or kill some of the worst of the worst among al-Qaida in Iraq.

In October of 2007, as you can see, the pace remains a steady one and a strong one in terms of capturing or killing al-Qaida's leadership.

The fact of the matter is, we could put up a new chart for each month until this month and last month. The fact is, we are making enormous progress. So why in the world would this Senate want to change course and grab defeat from the jaws of victory, when it comes to putting al-Qaida on the run?

I have to say on a contentious subject such as this, where it seems as though people have their own version of reality, the best evidence—and one that is undeniable—is the fact we have not had another terrorist attack in the United States since September 11, 2001.

While al-Qaida is on the minds of my colleagues, though, this is a valuable opportunity for us to talk about the fight against al-Qaida as part of the overall global war on terror. Today, al-Qaida and other like-minded radical jihadist groups still pose a very real threat to the safety of America's vital national security interests, both here and abroad.

These Islamic extremists go under a lot of different names: Hezbollah, operating in Lebanon and in parts of Iran and Syria; Hamas; al-Qaida in Iraq; the Taliban—all of which have the common ideology which allows them somehow to celebrate the murder of innocent civilians as part of their twisted goals.

Al-Qaida remains active not only in Iraq but worldwide. This is literally a franchise operation which in an Internet age allows like-minded radicals to communicate with one another, and through the use of relatively cheap explosives and human bombs to basically commit terror all around the world.

It is the existence of this threat that warrants our continued vigilance and sustained efforts to neutralize them, and Congress must continue to support our military in defeating al-Qaida on every front. We have been successful. But it is important to recognize this threat is not only located in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is a global threat.

Recently, ADM Mike McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, outlined terror attacks prevented in New Jersey and Illinois—that is right, right

here in the United States of America. He also outlined attacks that have been prevented abroad in Denmark, Spain, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In the opinion of those who know best—our intelligence professionals—this enemy and this threat is real. This enemy plans to attack us, and it is smart, adaptable, and ruthless.

Somehow, some Members of the Senate have been able to convince themselves against all the evidence that al-Qaida is not present in Iraq and that if we fought al-Qaida in Afghanistan we would be safe here at home. The fact is, it is true the Taliban provided safe havens for al-Qaida in Afghanistan. Al-Qaida has also found a safe haven in Iraq. But due to the great work of our young men and women in the military, due to our intelligence professionals, due to the intelligence we are able to gain from the cooperation of Iraqi citizens through the Awakening Councils, who have simply gotten fed up with the barbaric tactics of al-Qaida—the murder, the rape, the torture of their own people and thus have cooperated now with coalition forces to root out al-Qaida—we do have al-Qaida on the run in Iraq.

But that is a fragile condition, and a trend we must continue, not only through the use of allied and coalition forces but through the rebuilding of the Iraqi police force and military, and encouraging citizens, such as the Awakening Councils, to come forward and provide intelligence.

But the fact of the matter is, if the United States of America does not lead the fight in this global war on terror, more innocent people will die. There is no other country in the world that is capable as we are, that has the vital national security interests that we do, to fight this war.

Again, this parallel universe that some occupy here in Washington, DC, that allowed them somehow to convince themselves that this threat is not real, defies the facts. There are those who propose countless resolutions in the Senate and the Congress to withdraw from Iraq based on a political or arbitrary timetable, which makes no sense. As the Iraq Study Group said, we should leave Iraq as soon as possible and define it not in political terms but in terms of conditions on the ground, and that is once the Iraqis are able to govern and defend themselves.

We know that politicians here in Washington have declared the surge a failure before it even started, but they have had to come to grips with the fact that you are always in jeopardy when you bet against the men and women of the U.S. military and our leadership and under the leadership of people such as GEN David Petraeus and GEN Raymond Odierno.

We have seen the surge of American troops, along with the increased capacity of the Iraqis to defend themselves, meet with enormous success and reverse a trend that was dangerously cas-

cading toward a civil war and ethnic cleansing. But the fact is that despite the repeated efforts by some here in Congress who have declared defeat before this new strategy was even allowed to take hold have now had to deal with the fact that almost without exception, everyone who goes to Iraq comes back with the report that our men and women in uniform are being successful and that the surge is working.

I went with a couple of my colleagues, Senator ISAKSON and Senator COLEMAN, to Iraq in January where we were able to ride, in armored vehicles, admittedly, to forward operating bases that previously had been lost to al-Qaida, where refugees had simply abandoned their shops and their homes given the threat posed to the Iraqi people themselves from this ruthless enemy. The fact is, people are moving back home. Shop owners are opening their shops. We were able to taste some of the bread cooked in a bakery in an area called Ghazaliya outside of Baghdad that previously could not operate. We went to a local department store that previously had to be closed and abandoned literally because of the threat of al-Qaida and looked at some of the wares for sale.

So this debate that continues here in Washington seems to me to be increasingly out of touch with the reality in Iraq and the clear evidence that this new tactic, this counterinsurgency tactic being deployed by General Odierno, General Petraeus, and our men and women in uniform in Iraq is succeeding. It is because of that success that we are able to bring back by this summer roughly 40,000 troops to the loving arms of their families and in answer to the prayers of many Americans who wish to bring them home but bring them home with honor and after they have been successful in accomplishing the goals they set out to do.

Now, because of the evidence of the military effort in Iraq, a combination of our coalition forces and Iraqis and local citizens cooperating to get al-Qaida on the run, there are those who said: Well, OK, the glass is not half full, it is still half empty. Where is the political reconciliation that is necessary for the Iraqis to govern themselves?

While progress on the political front has been slower than any of us might have wished for, we are seeing very positive signs of political reconciliation. The Iraqi Parliament recently met some major milestones for success, and these are very important because these are the evidence of the political reconciliation many of the skeptics have looked for and pointed out as not having been met. So it is important to acknowledge the facts.

First, they passed an accountability and justice law—the first major step in debaathification reform. We know that many of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party members were excluded from the new Iraq, and this is the first major

step to allow people who do not have blood on their hands, who weren't part of the leadership of Saddam's Baath Party, responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, to allow them to take their first steps back into governing the new Iraq and participating in full civic life.

In addition, just a few short weeks ago the Iraqi Parliament passed three other significant pieces of legislation. They set a date for provincial elections, recognizing, as we do here in Washington, that not all wisdom emanates from the Nation's Capital, that they believe in local governance and regional governance, and that is why the provincial elections are so important as well.

The Iraqi Government or Parliament allotted \$48 billion for 2008 spending, meaning that because of increased oil revenue, they were able to take on more and more of the financial responsibilities of rebuilding and governing their own country.

Finally, they provided limited amnesty to certain detainees in Iraqi custody—an important, although difficult, step to try to make sure the reconciliation occurs on an individual level so that people need not be permanently cast as outsiders and given nothing but the opportunity to undermine reconstruction and reconciliation but actually be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

The passage of the provincial powers law is one of the 18 benchmarks for reconciliation in Iraq which were set by the Congress just this last year.

Despite this concrete evidence of improvement and of meeting benchmarks for political reconciliation, there are those here in Congress who have simply ignored those positive steps, not only on the security front but on the political reconciliation front. Unfortunately, it seems as if too often our partisan differences seem to overwhelm facts and common sense and the common interests of all of us in America in an Iraq that is able to govern and to defend itself because our shared goal—which is to bring home our troops—is one that could be met when conditions on the ground permit those troops to come home without squandering the blood and the treasure that have been spent in trying to restore democracy to a country that knew nothing other than the boot heel of a dictator for too many years.

There are so many wonderful stories of success and commitment and patriotism in Iraq, and I would like to just close on this. I see my distinguished colleague from Wyoming on the floor, and I want to defer to him after another few minutes. I want to recognize and honor the great sacrifice by Texans deployed in harm's way in support of the global war on terror.

Some of our troops serving in far-away battlefields since 9/11 have exhibited incredible bravery and heroism in the face of personal danger, and I wish to share one story of one Texan among

many who has served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. I wish to tell the story of SGT Omar Hernandez, assigned to Bravo Company, the 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, TX.

Sergeant Hernandez has been awarded the Silver Star for exceptional bravery and gallantry in action against an enemy. He did this while serving as a team leader on a foot patrol in Baghdad. His patrol consisted of a squad of American soldiers, an interpreter, and eight Iraqi national policemen. Their mission, as is critical to the counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, was to secure the population, to make them feel safe. They moved from house to house on crowded Baghdad streets interviewing the local population as part of their job.

During the course of one interview, though, Sergeant Hernandez and the Iraqi police accompanying him were moving to security positions on the outside of a home when they were suddenly engaged by several well-aimed bursts of machine gun fire from the south. Sergeant Hernandez immediately identified the enemy's location and returned fire, simultaneously instructing the Iraqi police to follow his lead. A second burst of well-aimed fire erupted from the enemy's position, wounding all three members of the team. Sergeant Hernandez himself sustained a gunshot wound to his right thigh. Both Iraqi police sustained serious injuries, immobilizing both of them.

Not realizing the severity of their wounds, Sergeant Hernandez ordered the Iraqi policemen to follow him to a covered position behind a cement wall. As he continued to engage the enemy, Sergeant Hernandez realized that the Iraqi police were too badly injured to reach cover on their own. Seeing that these Iraqi policemen were stuck in the enemy's direct line of fire, Sergeant Hernandez went above and beyond the call of duty, risking his own life by running under direct fire to pull these Iraqi policemen to safety. Without covering fire, Sergeant Hernandez left his covered position—not once but twice—to move these wounded Iraqi policemen to a safer position. He did all of this despite the danger to himself and having a gunshot wound to his leg. Despite his injuries and despite the continued barrage of enemy fire, Sergeant Hernandez continued to fire on the enemy position. It was only after he was certain that the threat was eliminated that he finally allowed a squad mate to treat his wounds.

Sergeant Hernandez is just one of many brave men and women who wear the uniform of the U.S. military who are serving nobly in Iraq and Afghanistan. While there is no doubt that his courage and strength were extraordinary, in some ways this is a typical sort of story of the bravery of our men and women in uniform. It should be clear that Sergeant Hernandez is representative of the quality and character of our military men and women.

I think this also tells a story of the relationship that exists between our soldiers and Iraq security forces. They fight shoulder to shoulder. They fight and sacrifice together to make their country a better place so that peace and stability might come to Iraq and so that the forces of terror and extremism that wish America and our allies harm will find no sanctuary in that country.

Sergeant Hernandez, thankfully, has now recovered from his wounds and is stationed at Fort Bliss out in El Paso, TX. He has a 17-month-old boy and has been married to his wife Jennifer Kay for 3 years.

Sergeant Hernandez, it is worth noting, was on his third tour in Iraq. These young men and women and their incredible families are our most precious national asset. The tremendous sacrifices they make and have made over these last years ought to leave us with awe-struck silence. Think of what these men and women have invested in this war in terms of their sweat, their blood, tears and effort. What message would we be sending to these brave men and women when we tell them to come home when victory sits on the horizon?

Sergeant Hernandez wouldn't abandon his colleagues in the Iraqi National Police force, but there are some here in Washington—a world away—who want to ask him and all of our troops to abandon the Iraqis and come home before the job is done.

Those who have been clamoring for troop withdrawals for months upon months, regardless of the news from Iraq, all the while extolling the virtues of our military, I think have been telling only half the story. Yet, at the same time, they refuse to pass the critical funding, intelligence capabilities such as the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act reauthorization bill which sits over in the House of Representatives and which, because of the failure to act by Speaker PELOSI and the leadership in the House, has left our intelligence authorities deaf to new terrorist targets that, if detected, would likely detour and defeat attacks against American citizens, both here and abroad.

Mr. President, the American people often accuse politicians of saying one thing and doing another. But this is a clear case. Servicemembers such as Sergeant Hernandez deserve not only our words but our unmitigated support.

I think our task is clear and that is to let our men and women in uniform do the job they have volunteered to do and which they are so ably performing. We ought to do nothing to deter or impede or obstruct their success, especially when success appears to be so much more clearly on the horizon than a few short months ago. But as these charts have indicated, we are having tremendous success in taking down al-Qaida—those who celebrate the murder of innocent civilians in pursuit of their own twisted goals. The last thing we

need to do is to pass legislation that would literally draw defeat from the jaws of victory.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I will make a few comments about what is going on around here. I am not sure what has gotten into the water around here, but something strange has happened over the last couple days. Well, maybe it is not so strange, or even unusual, and that is unfortunate. What I am talking about is a sort of snowstorm, a whiteout—the people in Wyoming will know what I am talking about—except this whiteout isn't made of snow.

Bear with me while I describe our last vote, the one we did last night. It was cloture on a motion to proceed to a measure that says we should have a plan to fight al-Qaida and that we should basically put that plan out for public comment. That might strike people outside Washington as a little odd, and it should. Doesn't our military already have a plan? Yes, it does. Why would we want to tell al-Qaida how we plan to defeat them? Good questions. Good points.

The fact that the motion to debate the proposal passed overwhelmingly might further leave people scratching their heads. Senators, the majority of whom, I would venture to say, do not want the proposal to become law, voted to waste the Senate's time debating this measure. Why? Is it because debating this will actually help us to defeat al-Qaida? Is it because debating this will make our Nation more secure? No, it would not.

This is all happening at a time when we have an urgent need to work on solutions to the problems just about every one of the American people worry about. Health care is at the top of the list. Congress needs to wrangle with spiraling health care costs. Medicare is going broke. Social Security is following suit a little bit later. There are education measures on the table right now that we need to finish. Our economy begs for positive action. We have a budget problem in Congress. But the Senate came to a decision. On a vote of 89 to 3 last night, this body decided that instead of working on these problems I mentioned, we needed to debate a bill few of us want to ultimately approve. That is wrong. The American people did not elect us to play "gotcha" politics. They want to see action on real problems. They want to see results—positive results.

I voted against debating on this ill-begotten proposal because Congress needs to be doing the work the people sent us here to do.

National defense is of utmost importance to our Nation. Without a strong national defense, we would not have the free country we have. I strongly support our troops. I thank them every day and pray for them and their families every night. I do all in my power to

see that they have the support and the resources to do their job. Their lives, and ultimately our way of life, depend on it; it depends on them. But this proposal we are debating now doesn't help them. Our military strategists, our leaders in the field, do not want this legislation.

Of course we need a plan to defeat al-Qaida in every corner of the world where this wretched terrorist group hides. We need to focus on the terrorists and defeat them at every turn. But is it Congress's role to insist on a plan and then share the plan with al-Qaida? That is ultimately what this legislation would do. If Congress forces the administration and our military to write this plan according to Congress's specification, then Congress is going to want to see the plan to ensure it meets Congress's requirements. We all know Congress cannot keep a secret. If you tell the enemy your strategy, then your strategy will not work. This is a bill that is fundamentally flawed at the outset. I voted not to debate the bill. I was one of three, but a bill not worth doing is a bill not worth debating.

Just before September 11, 2001, I was given the opportunity to serve on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I was the ranking member of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Antiterrorism. It was during August that I was assigned to that. So in September, since I was the newest person on the committee and the least ranking, a lot of people said: How did he get on that committee? It wasn't important until after September 11, 2001—or at least we didn't place that kind of importance on it. Through that role, I was given the opportunity to work directly with other countries at the United Nations on ways to stop terrorism. I am an accountant, so I was delighted to be a part of the group that said one of the answers was to concentrate on following the money. It made a huge difference and it continues to make a difference. Countries that will never publicly admit to helping in the hunt for terrorists have helped. I know countries peer pressured other countries into helping with the fight against terrorism. Terrorists were caught, they were prosecuted, and some were executed. More sophisticated versions of this plan to fight terrorism are still in operation today. But we should not disclose the plan because that would make them worthless.

The Senate wants additional reports. Why? Congress has already mandated reports on the National Security Strategy of the United States, the National Defense Strategy of the United States, the National Homeland Security Strategy of the United States, the National Military Strategy of the United States, the Quadrennial Defense Review Report, the National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terror, the National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq. Does that sound like plenty of work for the Pentagon?

I want you to know the Pentagon is already doing what this bill wants us to do. We do need a plan. We have a plan. We cannot make that plan public without allowing the enemy to figure out how to combat every article in it. Why are we having this debate? Well, I know we are having this debate partly to place emphasis on the fact that we need to get the FISA legislation passed. Daily, we are missing opportunities to know what al-Qaida is doing and planning. We were able to do that until about a week ago. Congress could easily approve the FISA bill. It passed out of this body by a significant majority. The House needs to pass it and send it to the President. What does that bill do? One of the things it does is make terrorists almost as accountable as drug dealers. Yes, we have stronger laws in this country for drug dealers and the way to interdict that than we do for terrorists, without having the FISA bill.

What do the American people want Congress to do? They want us to improve their ability to access quality health care. They want us to have the capability under FISA, but they want us to concentrate on those areas that we have specific jurisdiction on, not just checking up on other people to see if they are getting their work done but checking up on ourselves to see if we are getting our work done. I think the economy, which includes health care, is the biggest issue the American people are interested in. Are we debating that? No. We are debating something I think we already have had 36 votes on in various forms, all of which failed. If you try something 36 times and it doesn't work, maybe you ought to move on to something else. I am suggesting health care is one of those issues we ought to be working on and that we could work on and that comes under our jurisdiction and we have direct responsibility for it. Or maybe education. I know the people of America want better education for their kids. They expect us to have as much as possible in place that will expedite that, that will work with the parents, the teachers, the administrators, and the communities to make sure our kids have the best job opportunities in the world. They want them to be able to have jobs and afford a home and have food for their family. They want a retirement system that helps them to be secure when they finish working.

That is why I voted against debating this bill. We are not here to be non-responsive and nonproductive by taking nonactions. Let's act. Let's sit down together and come to an agreement on what we can do to make health care better for this country. Let's talk about what we can do to improve education in this country and then let's make it happen. Let's spend the Senate's time on real legislation of substance—ones we are supposed to solve and that we have the jurisdiction to solve and ones we have the ability to solve and ones we have the desire to

solve. I have been working with people on both sides of the aisle on a number of bills that are solvable—maybe not to perfection, but hardly anything here winds up with perfection. They can be solved with 100 percent agreement across the aisle on the 80 percent of the issues that we agree on. That would be real progress for America.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I understand we are in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business has expired.

Without objection, the Senator is recognized.

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SURVEILLANCE ACT

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to speak briefly about one of the issues that has been debated over these 2 days, which is the reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. This bill, which passed the Senate in a bipartisan way, is now sitting in the House. This bill is critical to our national security.

I know there are some who will argue that the bill represents a threat in some way to American civil liberties. From my standpoint, nothing is more important to me than protecting the rights of Americans under the terms of our Constitution.

One of the terms of our Constitution is that the Federal Government has the responsibility to protect the American citizens and America from attacks by enemies. That is what we swear an oath to, by the way, when we take this job, to protect and defend this Nation.

We know for a fact that the forces of Islamic fundamentalists, which are led by fanatical individuals, have committed themselves to attacking our Nation, destroying our culture, and killing Americans. We have already seen their actions take place in the 1990s when they attacked the warship *USS Cole*, when they attacked our Embassies in Africa, and, of course, on 9/11.

We also know for a fact that our best weapon of self-defense in this war is to be on the offense, to find them before they can harm us. That is one of the reasons we are in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

The great advantage we have in this war is the sophistication of our Nation. Obviously, the greatest advantage we have is we have the cause of right on our side—freedom, democracy, and liberty. But the great tactical advantage we have is the sophistication of our Nation and our capacity to use that sophistication in the area of our military